



Pēriṇi Śiva Tāṇḍavam' or Lāśya Pēriṇi?

Vakkala Rama Krishna

PhD Dance Scholar, Dance, SN School of Arts and Communications, University of Hyderabad.

Today's Pēriṇi dance form is popularly known as Pēriṇi Siva Tāṇḍavam. It is a male oriented dance form and performs in Tāṇḍava tradition and there are no women performers in the whole performance. The performers extensively perform Pēriṇi Siva Tāṇḍavam in the mode of Tāṇḍava tradition contains Valor and Furious sentiments. Is it actually confined to a Tāṇḍava tradition or it should perform in the mode of Lāśya Tradition?

The earliest available detailed work on dance/dramaturgy is Bharata's treatise *Nāṭyaśāstra* (2nd BC to 2nd Cen. AD). Bharata's *Nāṭya Śāstra* is believed to be *Mārga Tradition*. In this treatise he discussed about *Nāṭya* and *Nṛtta*. 'Nāṭya' means 'Drama' and 'Nṛtta' is Tāṇḍava. For Lāśya he just mentioned '*Sukumāra-Prayōgamu*' but he did not use the word 'Lāśya'.

After Bharata the treatise *Bharatārṇava of Nandikeshwara* (3rd - 4th cen. AD), He used the word 'Lāśya' for the very first time and he mentioned the seven types of Lāśyas known as *Sapta Lāśyas*. There he mentioned about Pēriṇi as one of the Lāśya tradition.

After Nandikeshwara, the treatises, *Sangītha-Samaya-Sāra of Pārśvadēva* (1100-1200AD), *Sangītaratnākara of Sārṅgadēva* (1210-1247AD) and *Nṛttaratnāvalī of Jāyapa*, (1253 A.D) are the persons who exactly brings us to another concept in Indian dance i.e., *Mārga* and *Dēśi*, the classical and the folk, respectively all classical forms falls under the *Mārga* and the rest under folk (*Dēśi*).

According to the Telugu literature, from 13th century onwards there is a mention of Pēriṇi which was done by courtesans as 'Kēḷika'. In Tikkana's (1205-1288) *Virāṭa Parvam* of *Maha Bhārata*. In 14th century Yerrapreggaḍa's (1325-1353) '*Narasimha Purāṇam*'. In 15th century, 'Palnāṭi Vīra Caritra' by Śrīnātha (1365-70 to around 1450). In 16-17 century, Cennamarāju's "Cāru-candrōdayam". In 17th century Raghunatha Nāyaka (1600-1645).

Bharatārṇava Treatise is the primary text for Pēriṇi mentioned as one of the Lāśya (*Sapta Lāśyas*). According to Bharatārṇava, Nandikeshwara says – "Yāgnavalkya explained various Tāṇḍava which were performed by Lord Siva with the request of Goddess Pārvati he preached her and also Goddess Pārvati created Lāśya with the help of his consort. And both of them were composed *Mridanga/jati boles*". But Nandikeshwara explained these *Sapta Lāśyas* in brief in the 13th chapter. He mentioned that, these are all 7 types of *Lāśyas* but not Tāṇḍavas.

I did not understand how Nandikeshwara mentioned these 7 types of '*Lāśyas*' why don't he explain it as Tāṇḍavas! These *Sapta Lāśyas* were created and performed by Gods as well as Goddess. Suddha by Lord Śiva, Dēśi by Goddess Pārvati, Pēriṇi by Brahma, Prākṣhāna by Saraswati, and Kuṇḍalī by Vishnu, Dāṇḍika and Kalaśa by Lakshmi. A question will rise by listening to the word 'Lāśya' (*Sapta Lāśyas*) - who should perform, men or women? If they related to men, then why it had been mentioned as *Lāśyas*?

Generally, the dancers believe that Lāśya is meant for Women which look feminine. But if you study the treatise Bharatārṇava about Pēriṇi (*Sapta Lāśyas*), you would definitely come to a conclusion that these Pēriṇi is related to men. And also by studying *Sangītaratnākara of Sārṅgadēva*, *Sangītha-Samaya-Sāra of Pārśvadēva* and *Nṛttaratnāvalī of Jāyapa* then we understand in the qualities of Pēriṇi performance is related to men.

According to Nandikeshwara's *Abhinayadarpaṇa* he elucidate in the 22nd verse as:

sukumāram tu tallāśya muddhatam tāṇḍavam viduh

Which means, Lāśya is a feminine (*Sukumāra*) and Tāṇḍava is a forceful (*Uddhata*). But he did not mention that Tāṇḍava has to perform by men and Lāśya by women. Tāṇḍava is accepted to be that originally described by the saint Tāṇḍu directed by Lord Siva it is usually performed by men. Lāśya which was preached by Lord Śiva to Devi and it is usually performed by women and it is related to the

mutual affair of both men and women feeling which related to create erotic essence.

According to '*Sangītōpanishat*' by Sudhākalaśa in 14th cen. (1324-50 AD)

narakṛtam nṛttam; nāri kṛtam nṛtyam

Nṛtta is for men and Nṛtya is for women. So most of the learned believes that Tāṇḍava/Nṛtta is a forceful dance therefore it should be suitable for men. In the same way Lāśya/Nṛtya is a feminine dance and it is for women. Therefore these Lāśya and Tāṇḍavas then slowly performed by men and women.

In Nandikeshwara's *Abhinayadarpaṇa* he focused on the mode of dancing but not the gender- how the dancer has to perform whether he/she performs in forceful (*Uddhata*) then it should consider as Tāṇḍava and if he/she performs in feminine then it should be called as Lāśya. But it is not a matter of gender.

In Nṛttaratnāvalī Jāyapa has given a clarification on Lāśya lakshana of chapter-1, 57th verse, that this Lāśya which is related to both the men and women to create an erotic essence. Means here he had given a scope that men can also perform Lāśya to produce soft and delicate movements according to the graceful sentiment (*Śṛṅgāra*).

If we go with the said assertions, Pēriṇi is not in *Śṛṅgāra* (erotic sentiment) but it is in Comic Sentiment (*Hāsyā rasa*) in Bhāvāshraya/Vikāṭa/vāgaḍa part. But we don't know how this Pēriṇi they used to perform in those days! And also he did not mention any sentiment/rasa except Hāsyā/Comic sentiment. Jāyapa and Sārṅgadēva mentioned that the Pēriṇi Dancer has to create the ludicrous things imitations in Pēriṇi Panchangas in Vikāṭa and Bhāvāshraya parts.

In Bharatārṇava, the author says – "In Prēraṇa/Peruṇi Abhinaya the dancer uses ash all over the body. He leaves his hair up to shoulders and the gungoroos named 'Gharghara' ties to the knees. Keeps body in a gentle mode. The dancer should have an idea of *Pancāṅgas* (five parts) and the knowledge of the tāḷas timings and rhythms. In this way the Pēriṇi dancer begins 'Pēriṇi Abhinaya' to impress the spectators". Then he follows Five parts (*Pancāṅgas*). But he did not discussed about the ornamentation of the Pēriṇi dancer, what type of orchestra they had? How many dancers have to perform? What types of *Gītas* have to sing?

In *Sangītaratnākara* the author Sārṅgadēva had discussed about the Pēriṇi Paddhathi (mode), and what type of *Uṭpluthi karaṇas* has to done, how the dancer should enter on to the stage, and what type of instruments (orchestra) should be played. Even he did not mentioned that this Pēriṇi is one of the 7 types of Lāśyas or *Sapta Lāśyas* and what way it has to perform either in Tāṇḍava or Lāśya.

But in this treatise, he had given an order of the Pēriṇi perform like - the Pēriṇi dancer has to smeared ash all over the body and the head shaved leaving a tuft of hair, shining anklet-bells (*ghargharikas*) tied to the shanks and he enters after the Rigoṇi prabandha. While Rigoṇi prabandha is being played an actor whose head is clean shaven (*Aṭṭabōḍaka*) he enters and done a comic effect sentiment and he concludes with *Upsama* of the Rigoṇi prabandha. After Rigoṇi prabandha the Pēriṇi actor enters and perform *Gharghara* in *Saraswatikanṭābarāṇa/gārugi tala* the tāḷadāras plays cymbals together with the instrumentalists produce mandra sound by *mardala*. Then he performs *Vishama* (jumps) according to the *praharaṇa* and in *Abhōga*, the *Kavicāraka* and *Bhāvāshraya* has to perform.

In Nṛttaratnāvalī Jāyapa had given equal respect and authority to *Mārgi* as well as *Dēśi* traditions. And also he had given a new definition to the word 'Dēśi'. In the chapter -5, 3rd verse which is, - '*According to the taste of kings, they introduced new Dance forms (Nṛtta) which are favorite to them, therefore the new art form which evolve according to their provincial status that type of art forms can be noted as Dēśi*'.

In Bharatārṇava the Dēśi which is one of the *Sapta Lāśyas* and it is created and performed by goddess Pārvati as *Kuncitas* which are in 5 types namely: - *Nikuncita*, *Kuncita*, *Samyagākuncita*, *Pārśvakuncita* and *Ardhakuncita*.

In the text Nṛttaratnāvalī he had given a new definition for Dēśi and he merges all the Dēśi art forms which were highly prevalent, evolved and flourished in his (Kākatīyas) time. Pēriṇi dance is one of them, in this text he made a clear picture of practical work which means what type of ornamentation has to adorn the performer, what type of footwork has to be done, how the dancers have to enter on to the stage and what type of items have to perform. But he did not mention whether it is in Tāṇḍava or Lāsya.

According to the treatises; primary text for Pēriṇi, Bharatārṇava treatise, elucidates Pēriṇi as Lāsya tradition and further treatises both the authors Sārngadeva, Pārsadēva and Jāyana had mention just the name 'Pēriṇi'. But they did not mention whether Pēriṇi is in '*Tāṇḍava*' or '*Lāsya*' and in Nṛttaratnāvalī Jāyana had given a scope that in Pēriṇi Panchangas- Nṛttam (one of the Pēriṇi Panchangas) - *the dancer has to perform both the types of Tāṇḍava and Lāsya divisions*. Means directly or indirectly he had given a scope to perform Pēriṇi by men and also women. And coming to the literature evidence Pēriṇi was done by women in both Tāṇḍava and Lāsya traditions.

That is the reason the later writers had a mention of Pēriṇi which were done by the women dancers performed in the kings courts under the patronage of kings. There might be a scope that this art form transformed or migrated from male dancers to female dancers. So this Pēriṇi art form can perform in the mode of Tāṇḍava as well as Lāsya variations and that there is no evidence authenticated to perform Pēriṇi, only in Tāṇḍava mode or Lāsya mode of presentation. It can be done in both the modes of presentation.

When I was pursuing my MPA Dance at University of Hyderabad I took Pēriṇi subject for my dissertation work in the final semester. In this regard I got an opportunity to meet great personality Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna with the help of my Prof. M.S. Siva Raju. Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna had advised me to do PhD on Pēriṇi and also he told me that nobody had done research on this part. So when I started my research on Pēriṇi in the year 2012, I noticed many things regarding Lāsya Pēriṇi and I discussed with the eminent Pēriṇi dance scholars many times and now finally Lāsya Pēriṇi is vision to us. It is a great moment for Pēriṇi to perform in both the traditions of Lāsya and Tāṇḍava mode of presentations. Thanks to Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna sir for introducing me to a great world of Pēriṇi.

REFERENCES:

1. Ananthakrishnasharma, Rallapalli. 2007. JayapavirachitaNrittaratnawali. Pottisreeramulu Telugu University, Hyderabad.
2. Apparao, P.S.R. NatyaSastramu. Hyderabad.
3. Apparao, P.S.R. Abhinayadarpanam. Hyderabad.
4. VasudevaSastri, K. 1998. Bharatārṇava of Nandikeshwara. SaraswathiMahal Library. 74. Thanjavur.
5. Gairola, 1978. acharya nandikeshwar bharatarnav. Chowkhamba Amarabharati Prakashan. 01. Varanasi.
6. Kusumareddy, K. 2011. Telugu Nṛityakala Samskruti. Sri Uday printers. Hyderabad.
7. SubrahmanyaSastri, S. 1953. Sangitaratnakara of sarangadeva with Kalanidhi of kallinatha and Sudhakara of Simhabhupala. Vol – IV Adhyay 7. The Adyar Library. 20. Madras.
8. English translated by Kunjunniraja, K. and Radha burnier. 1976. Sangitaratnakara of Sarngadeva. Vol. IV chapter on dancing. The Adyar Library and research centre. 20. Madras.
9. Telugu translated by Bhavanarayanarao, dwaram. 2004. Sriparsvadevavirachita sangitasamayasa. Sri lakshmi ganapathi binding works. 534 350. Kovvuru.
10. Sudhakalasha. Sangitopanishat.
11. Somana, Palkurki. Panditaradya charitra.
12. Somana, Palkurki. Basavapuram. Ashva 2, 3.
13. Somana, Pidaparathi. Basavapuram. Ashva 2.
14. Tikkana. Andhra Mahabharatam-Virata. Ashva 1.
15. Somana, Nachana. Uttarharivamsam. Ashva 6.
16. Sri Somanatha. Palnativiracharitra.
17. Govindakavi, Poluri. Ragatalachintamani. Ashva 5.
18. Srinatha. Bhimakhandam. Ashva 1.
19. Nayaka, Raghunatha. Valmiki charitra. Ashva 3.
20. Nayaka, Vijayaraghava. Raghunadhabhudayam.